

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3028

INFO AMEMBASSY QUITO

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUAYAQUIL 67

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, EC

SUBJ: BUCARAM LIEUTENANT COMMENTS ON POLITICAL SCENE

SUMMARY: DURING EXTENDED PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH CG ON JAN. 19, ASSAD BUCARAM POLITICAL LIEUTENANT, GUIDO CHIRIBOGA, COMMENTED ON NATIONAL POLITICAL SCENE. STATED THAT RODRIGUEZ LARA GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTING TO SOLIDIFY SUPPORT WITH ECUADOREAN ELITE. MAINTAINED THAT GREATEST DANGERS TO GOVERNMENT WERE CORRUPTION AND INABILITY TO CONTROL INFLATION. SAID THAT NEGOTIATIONS UNDERWAY FOR POLITICAL ALLIANCE BETWEEN BUCARAM AND FRANCISO HUERTA MONTALVO BUT THAT BUCARAM WARY OF TAKING PUBLIC STAND AGAINST GOVERNMENT BECAUSE HE FEARS DEPORTATION.

1. CHIRIBOGA CLAIMS THAT RODRIGUEZ LARA MAKES PUBLIC STATEMENTS CURRYING FAVOR WITH RURAL AND URBAN MASSES BUT IS IN FACT MAKING DEALS WITH POWERFUL INTEREST GROUPS TO INCREASE ELITE SUPPORT FOR HIS PRESIDENCY. CHIRIBOGA SEES NO IMMEDIATE POSSIBILITY OF RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE. IF RODRIGUEZ BOWS OUT VOLUNTARILY OR UNDER PRESSURE HE WILL BE REPLACED BY ANOTHER MILITARY GOVERNMENT, POSSIBLY HEADED BY NAVAL OFFICER. GUAYAS MILITARY GOVERNOR RENAN OLMEDO MENTIONED AS GROOMING HIMSELF TO BECOME PRESIDENT. GREATEST DANGERS TO STABILITY OF PRESENT GOVERNMENT SAID TO BE INABILITY TO CONTROL INFLATION, ESPECIALLY RISING FOOD COSTS, AND INTERNAL CORRUPTION. LATTER AN ESPECIALLY DANGEROUS FACTOR BECAUSE MANY KEY MILITARY
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OFFICERS WITH SCANT PERSONAL ECONOMIC RESOURCES BEING TEMPTED BY

ABILITY TO RAKE IN HUGE PROFITS THROUGH UNDER-TABLE DEALS.

2. CHIRIBOGA CLAIMED PRELIMINARY NEGOTIATIONS UNDERWAY TO RE-FORM BUCARAM-FRANCISCO HUERTA ALLIANCE. PUBLIC STATEMENT AGAINST GOVERNMENT TO BE MADE POSSIBLY WITHIN 6 WEEKS. BUCARAM EXTREMELY WARY OF TAKING PUBLIC ANTI-GOVERNMENT POSTURE BECAUSE OF FEAR OF DEPORTATION CAUSED BY SOMEWHAT CLOUDY STATUS HIS CITIZENSHIP.

3. COMMENT: MOST INTERESTING CHIRIBOGA STATEMENT PERTAINS TO CITIZENSHIP QUESTION. ANTI-BUCARAM ELEMENTS HAVE OFTEN CLAIMED THAT HE IS NOT ECUADOREAN CITIZEN AND IN FACT WAS BO*RN IN SYRIA. MY UNDERSTANDING OF CHIRIBOGA EXPLANATION IS THAT BUCARAM WAS BORN IN AMBATO OF SYRIAN PARENTS. BECAUSE OF FRENCH-ECUADOREAN TREATY IN FORCE AT THAT TIME HE WAS INITIALLY REGARDED AS FRENCH CITIZEN, LATER SYRIAN UPON THAT COUNTRY'S INDEPENDENCE. APPARENTLY BUCARAM'S PARENTS NEVER REGISTERED HIS BIRTH LOCALLY AND HE HAS NO ECUADOREAN BIRTH CERTIFICATE.

LEGAL STATUS BUCARAM CITIZENSHIP DIFFICULT TO JUDGE, BUT APPARENTLY HE BELIEVES PRESENT GOVERNMENT COULD FORCE JUDICIARY TO RULE AGAINST HIME AND ORDER DEPORTATION. THIS OBVIOUSLY MUCH MORE SERIOUS THAN CONFINEMENT IN ORIENTE OR EXILE IN FOREIGN COUNTRY AND COULD BE EXPLANATION FOR THE USUALLY AGRESSIVE BUCARAM'S CONTINUED ABSTENTION FROM PUBLIC CRITICISM OF PRESENT REGIME.
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